Quick Guide: Access Best Practices

Team Collaboration

Collaborate with the entire communication team when looking at options for access

- It's a team effort to assess the person's physical capabilities related to movement, seating and positioning, fatigue, vision, and auditory abilities to determine the person's methods of access to communication systems
    - Consult an occupational therapist and physical therapist to identify fine or gross motor strengths when considering access
    - Ask caregivers what access options look easier for a user

Setting Expectations

- Access methods must be learned. Expect the learning to take time
    - Don't just throw something out because there is no immediate success
    - Look for potential, not mastery
- Access should be the easiest and least straining/fatiguing method
- Plan for fatigue, allow for practice

Positioning and Setup

The successfulness of the access method is highly dependent on the positioning of both the user and the device

- **Always position device to user, NOT position user to device!**
- Ensure the device meets the needs of the user in their most comfortable or natural position
- Mounting systems are crucial so that users have continual immediate access to device in their different positions (sitting, lying, standing etc.)
- **Eye Tracking Tips:**
    - Use the track status box to check positioning to ensure the eye(s) are visible and centered
    - Use default calibration for initial assessment and then use an individualized calibration profile
    - Change the target size and other settings based on the individual user's visual ability
    - Be aware of the potential lighting interference with the eye tracking device
- **Switch Scanning Tips:**
    - Avoid muscles with high tone, and don't use uncontrolled spasm movement for activation
    - Select the body part and movement with the best motor control and least used movement
    - Ask the individual for their opinion and trial the switch during motivating activities
    - Remember that different seating throughout the day may require different switch sites
    - Modify the switch, the settings within the system, or the mounting as needed

Managing Fatigue

- Take frequent breaks

- Use the Pause option when available

- Use partner navigation to reduce stress and fatigue

- Have a low-tech option, for example, gestures and letter boards with partner assisted scanning

Exploration

- Demonstrate the task first, then allow the individual to explore without demand

- Limit frustration with no-fail and fun activities and games

- Try different access methods to find new opportunities and uncover more potential

- Try systems that provide multiple access method options and can be modified to adapt to user's requirement changes

Evaluation

- Identify possible needs for multiple means of access

- Consider a multimodal communication approach with primary and secondary access options (no-tech, low-tech, high-tech)

- Use feature matching that includes device features and ability levels during evaluation and implementation

- Ensure that access method can be used repeatedly without fatigue, discomfort or embarrassment across all environments